1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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The near relations, including sons-in-law of the dying man, would come to him when death was expected, and it was a matter of duty for the sons or other near relatives to send information of a man's dangerous illness to his sons-in-law, and the latter would be justly angry if this information were withheld from them. We were never able to determine whether a son-in-law actually benefited by being present at his father-in-law's death, we believe that his presence was only an act of pious duty, and that he derived no increased right to the dead man's property by this. Certainly the land which came to a man at his marriage from his father-in-law would not be given to anyone else by the latter on his deathbed; we have, however, some reason to think that the unmarried sons of a man's sisters might, as the result of their attendance at their potential father-in-law's death-bed, be given land which otherwise would not have come to them until their marriage, or perhaps not at all. Handuna of Sitala Wanniya thought that a sick man might sometimes give his son-in-law a lock of his hair, but unfortunately it was not possible to discover under what circumstances, if any, this occurred. That land was commonly given to sons and not to sons-in-law by a dying man was clear from the very explicit statement made by Handuna, "My sons will naturally take my stones as evidence of their right to possess my land." With regard to the division of land between a man's children, it was pointed out that most people made their wishes on this point clear during their lifetime and it must always be remembered that no landed property passed without the consent of the grown men of the group.

It seemed that the borders of each group's territory were so well known to all the members that quarrels concerning land were very rare, trespassing upon another man's domain was almost unknown, though when it did occur it was strongly resented. Knox's account of something very like a pitched battle between two parties of Veddas which has already been quoted on p. 7 shows this, and we were everywhere told that until a few years ago a man trespassing on the territory of others might have been shot without fear of this provoking reprisals.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

202 177 With regard to the existence of message sticks mentioned in the last paragraph, very careful inquiries were made of Veddas, Sinhalese peasants and Sinhalese headmen, including Mr Bibile, Ratemahatmaya. There seemed no doubt that among the peasant Sinhalese messages were traditionally transmitted by the conveyance of certain objects. We are unable to say whether this system was ever well developed and applied to many of the emergencies of life, but it seemed to be the general impression among our informants that the practice was formerly more common than at present. We were able, however, to hear of two messages habitually sent in this way among the more backward jungle Sinhalese at the present day. The first of these was the transmission of a piece of creeper with one, two, or three knots tied in it. This was sent wrapped in a fragment of cloth and was a call to the recipient to come to the sender, the urgency of the latter's need being indicated by the number of knots. We consider the use of this message object thoroughly established as a Sinhalese custom, it was in use in the neighbourhood of Bibile until recently and is still used in remoter jungle districts.

[96] A lock of hair usually cut from the head of the dead man and twisted round a small stick and wrapped in a leaf or fragment of cloth was sent as a sign that a death had occurred. Our impression is that at the present day this is essentially a Sinhalese custom, for the Vedda Arachi of Potuliyadde told us that among the jungle Sinhalese when a man died away from his home, his people might be informed of his death in this way. We could not hear of this custom among the least sophisticated of the Veddas we met, though it was said to exist at Henebedda, where however, if it really occurred, it may have been due to Sinhalese influence. With regard to its existence among the Veddas apart from Sinhalese influence, it seemed to us that the importance of a lock of hair as evidence of land transfer (described on p. 114) renders it unlikely that hair would be sent as evidence of death. The care that the Vedda Arachi of Potuliyadde took when bringing me his "seisin" to photograph, of which a lock of hair was an important part, was very noticeable[1].

[1] On the other hand the custom may have been derived from the Vedda practice,